



A Tribute to Dr K.V.Raman (1934-2024) a Historian and Archaeologist

K.V.Ramakrishna Rao

How Prof K.V. Raman got interested in History and Archaeology: Prof K.V. Raman has been one of few historians and archaeologists of the current period, who had moved with many other historians, archaeologists and students. D.C. Sircar, K.A.Nilakanta Sastri, T.V.Mahalingam, P.Panchamukhi, V.D.Krishnaswamy, Malcolm Adiseshiaiah, K.R.Krinivsan,

K.V.Soundararajan, Nobura Karasima, Vimala Begley, Y.Subbarayalu, and others included in the list. Definitely, many of them still remember him and his association. He was born in Chingleput in 1934 as the eldest son of Sri K.V. Parthasarathy Iyengar and St Janaki. As his father was an advocate, and some of his proficiency has been passed on to him also. This is what he said about himself, "I



K.V.Raman with his batchmates

cannot remember what got me interested in archaeology and temples but among the first exciting events in my life was the joy I felt when my articles were published in the *Modern Review* and the *Indian Review*." That is, he started contributing to journals, when he was studying.

His education from Chingleput to Tambaram to Madras: He studied at the St. Joseph school, Chingleput and Chennai Christian College, Tambaram. Later, in 1955, he did his Masters in History and Archeology from the University of Madras. Thus, he narrates, "Dr. A.J. Boyd, Prof. McNicol and Dr. Chandran Devanesan among others, gave me a firm grounding in empirical research, the need to focus on facts and approach anything with a method. These qualities have stood me in good stead throughout my life." He did an M.Litt degree submitting his thesis entitled, "The Early History of Madras

Region" under the guidance of T.V. Mahalingam and M. Arockiaswami. Thus, his passion for history was revealed through his studies.

His book on Madras gives many interesting details: It traced through inscriptions the history of all the villages that are within the city of Madras today. He said, "Now commuting is easy but in those days, places such as Velachery, Kodambakkam and Thiruvananthapuram were difficult to get to, with buses that were infrequent." About the Pallavaram cave temple, he pointed out that the cave was said to have a pillared hall, there were no doors or figures at the entrance. The architrave above the capitals of one pillar contained inscriptions of King Mahendravarman – I, who is said to have done pioneering work in scooping out rocks to construct temples, without using brick, mortar, or timber. Thus, he

meticulously recorded the recent past.

What K.V.Raman says about Tiruvotriyur: About Tiruvotriyur, he noted that Thiruvottriyur has a continuous history going back to the 7th Century and two hundred and odd inscriptions record its development almost until contemporary times. As per the scholar, donors came from all over the country, including Kashmir! In the 10th Century came Niranjana Guruvar, who built a temple here dedicated to Niranjaneswarattu Mahadevan – a name that suggests that the benefactor was from Kerala. He established a math here to teach the Soma Siddhanta of the Pasupatha cult and that attracted many monks. One of those who came to study there was Chaturanana Panditha, who as Guru Vallabha had been the preceptor to Rajaditya, the elder son of Parantaka Chola I (907-953 CE). When that prince was killed in the battle against the Rashtrakutas at Takkolam, Vallabha took to monastic orders, being known thereafter as Chaturanana Panditha. In due course, he became the head of a Soma Siddhanta Math at Thiruvottriyur and after him, it would appear that a series of pontiffs, all of them taking the same name, headed the establishment. In the 12th Century, a Vagisha Panditha was also



K.V.Raman with Kan

associated with the same math. The poet Kampan who lived at the same time and composed his Ramayana at Thiruvottriyur, is also said to have been a devotee of this monastery which was also known as Thirumayana Matha. The head pontiff of the Math had a say in the management of the temple and kept an eye on its accounts as well.



K.V.Raman with Varadharajan VC

About Chetput etc: K.V. Raman noted how a noble in the camp of the Rashtrakuta King Krishna III made a gift of gold to the Tiruvottriyur temple and this was deposited with the residents of Settruppedu in Thudarmuniyurnadu. This village is identified by him as modern Chetpet. An article in the Adyar Library



K.V.Raman with Malcolm Adseshaiah

Bulletin of 1958 quotes from a map of 1798, which clearly has the village of Chetpet marked. And so, the place existed long before Namberumal Chetty came along. "I try my best to conjure up a vision of these villages being sleepy, quiet and sparsely populated but give up after the best of efforts!" His thesis for PhD on the Varadaraja Temple is sadly out of print as are most of his other books, such as, his History of the Pandyas in Tamil. Dr. Raman's passion became his profession in 1957 when he joined the Exploration Wing of the Archaeological Survey of India, Southern Circle.

As an ASI archaeologist: In 1957, he joined ASI Southern Region as an Exploration Assistant. In 1960, he was trained at the Archaeological Survey of India under B.B.Lal. In 1960, he completed the course from the first batch of the School of Archaeology, now called the Institute of Archaeology. Later in 1961, Raman was appointed as Superintendent of Archeology in the Chennai Circle of the Archaeological Survey of India. His first explorations were on the banks of the Vaigai and Guntar rivers. They found many pre-200 BCE sites on the banks, in what are now small villages. The learning



K.V.Raman with D.C.Sircar & Others



K.V.Raman with M.Karunanidhi C.M.



K.V.Raman with K.R.Srinivasan &
K.V.Soundararajan

served him well in what he considers the most exciting of his excavations – Poompuhar. It was called Kaberis Emporian in the 1st century CE Roman chronicles.

He and the team found several beads, pottery shards and a rare Buddha Vihara foundation, all from the last three or the first three centuries of the Christian era. The Buddhist Vihara and the small bronze image of the Buddha were unique finds. "The tragedy is that despite rich literary evidence, most of the buildings of the first few centuries did not have stone foundations and were built of brick and wood. They were broken down for use during later times and that is why it is difficult to find intact structures," he



K.V.Raman with V.D.Krishnaswamy

noted. In such a long and distinguished career and with close to 100 publications that include books and articles, is there something he has left undone? "It's hard to say," he says and noticing my persistence, adds, "I wish we could excavate Madurai more, it is after all among the most ancient cities still inhabited but with so much of construction now, it isn't easy." His other books include, 'Uraiyur,' 'Sculptural Art of Tirupati Temple' (the mandapam itself has disappeared), 'Arikamedu Excavations'(co-authored) and 'South East Asia Art.' Many of his former colleagues and students recently presented him with a felicitation volume in his honour. He became a Professor of Ancient History and Archaeology, at the University of Madras from 1976-1995.



K.V.Raman with Subordinates.



K.V.Raman with Japanese Scholar

K.V.Raman with Nebura Karasima

Awards received etc: He is the recipient of many honours such as the UNESCO Regional Educational Award and Senior Fellow of the Association of Commonwealth Universities in the U.K. The book has articles on pre-and proto-historical and historical sites in Tamil Nadu, port towns of Tamil Nadu (including Mylapore), Tamil Brahmi inscriptions, Mylapur – An Ancient Trading Centre of the Coromandel Coast, Excavations at Pumpuhar, and many other topics including numismatics, hero-stones and ancient merchant guilds. He

visited South-East Asian countries from 1992-1995 as a member of the Indo-Japanese team headed by Prof. Noboru Karashima to study historical and cultural relations and was Visiting Professor of ART History at the University of Georgia, Athens, U.S.A. (1998). He was the President of the Indian History Congress in Amritsar (Ancient History section) in 1985; President of the Numismatic Society of India at Shantiniketan in 1989; General President of South Indian Numismatic Society in 1996; President of the South Indian History Congress in 1997. He received the Dr. V.S. Wakankar Award for



K.V.Raman & R.Nagasamy honoured



K.V.Raman addressing MU senate

excellence in Field Archaeology for the year 2002 from the Indian Archaeological Society, New Delhi.

As an Archaeological Superintendent: K. V. Raman, worked as an Archaeological Superintendent in the

Archaeological Survey of India, Chennai Circle. He was one of the excavators in 1966-67 and 1972-73 at Arikamedu and Kavripoompattinam city. He was with S.R. Rao, when the NIO conducted a preliminary exploration conducted near Poompuhar. K. V. Raman was a scholar of

archaeology and temple architecture. He published the report of excavations at Kavripoompattinam along with the archaeologist K.V. Soundararajan. He has also published several books on archaeology and Kanchi Varadaraja Perumal temple architecture and sculpture.

My association with Dr K. V. Raman: I met Dr K.V. Raman many times at the Department of Ancient History and Archaeology, when I was asked to meet and co-ordinate for many seminars and conferences. The Mythic Society and Bharatiya Itihasa Sankalana Samiti (BISS) conducted a national seminar on Aryan Problem from July 21st to 23rd 1991 at Bangalore, and many historians attended. I prepared a paper, "Ariyar in the Ancient Tamil literature," and it was sent to K.V. Raman for scrutiny. When accepted for presentation, I had the privilege of doing so under the Presidentship of Dr. Iravatham Mahadevan. When the first session of the Tamilnadu History Congress (TNHC) was held at Madras on September 10 and 11, 1994, I had an opportunity to present my paper, "The Karanams of the Ancient Tamils". Prof K.V. Raman was the sectional president and after discussion, he recommended my paper, however, it was not included in the proceedings due to some technical reason, as revealed through Dr. K.R.Hanumanthan. when a festschrift was

published to honour him in 2010, I was so happy to find my paper "Megaliths: Mathematics and Astronomy," included in that volume.

Prof K.V. Raman and Dr R. Nagaswamy: There was some difference in opinion between him and Dr R. Nagaswamy and many tried to bring them together. One Sri Sriram Sathe, perhaps did his best to do so. Very often he used to come to Madras and meet Dr / Prof. Iravatham Mahadevan, K.V. Raman, R. Nagaswamy and others. The International Society for the Investigation of Ancient Civilizations and Bharatiya Itihasa Sankalana Samiti conducted a National seminar on chronology, at the Ethiraj College from August 18th to 20th 1995, and many leading historians attended. Here too, they attended on separate dates. When a national seminar was organized about Indian historiography held from January 30th to February 1st 1998 at Bhayandar near Bombay, efforts were made to invite both, but, while K. V. Raman could attend, R. Nagaswamy could not attend. Here, I had the opportunity of meeting many historians. Incidentally, Dr Venkata Raghottam and I were in the same room or rather, I had the opportunity to stay with him. I was asked to co-ordinate with these leading personalities and I used to visit them requesting them to attend and providing feedback to the concerned.